



CS 6474 Social Computing: Activism and Social Movements

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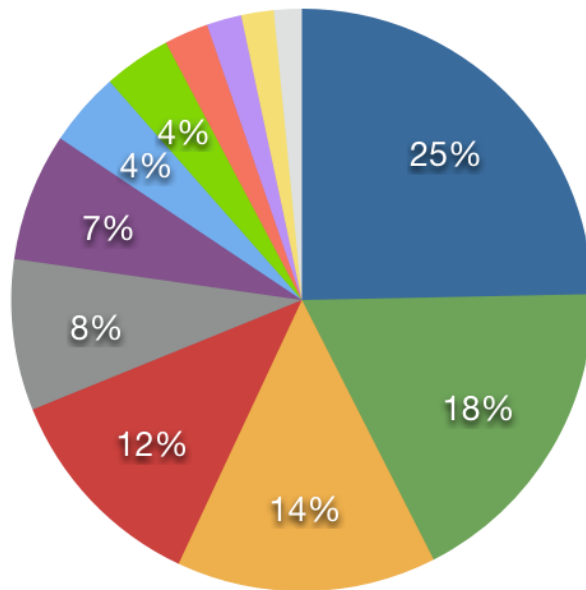
Week 15 | November 28, 2016

The Revolutions Were Tweeted: Information Flows during the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions

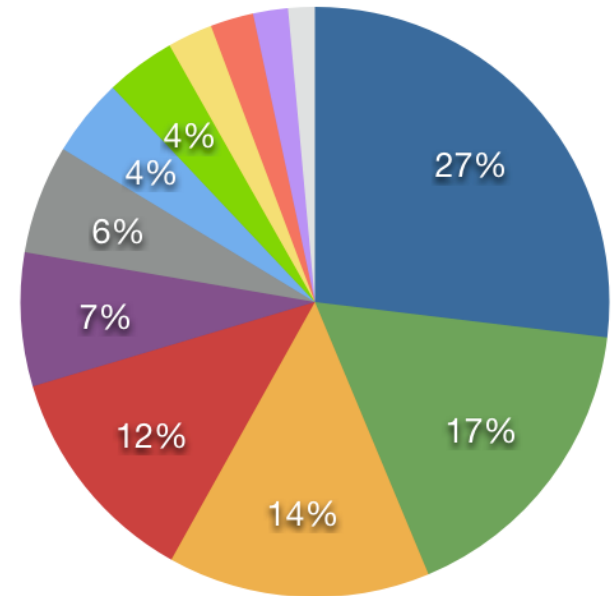
Summary

- Analysis of Twitter information flows during the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings
 - Tunisian demonstrations from January 12–19, 2011
 - Egyptian demonstrations from January 24–29, 2011
- Identify “key actor types,” e.g., MSM organizations, individual journalists, influential regional and global actors, and other participants who actively posted to Twitter on these two revolutions
- Study contagion of information by each actor type
- Examine relationship between traditional news media and social media in the two revolutions

Actor Type Distribution (Tunisia)

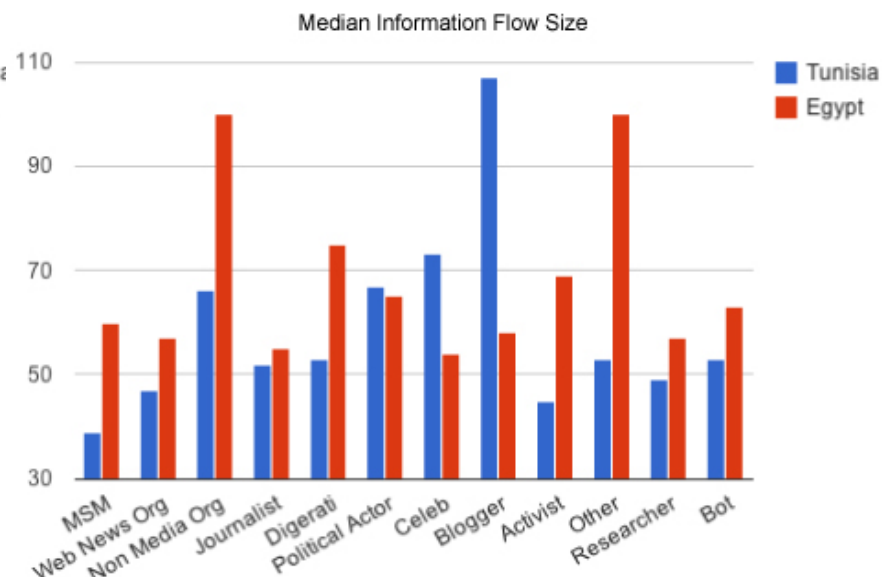
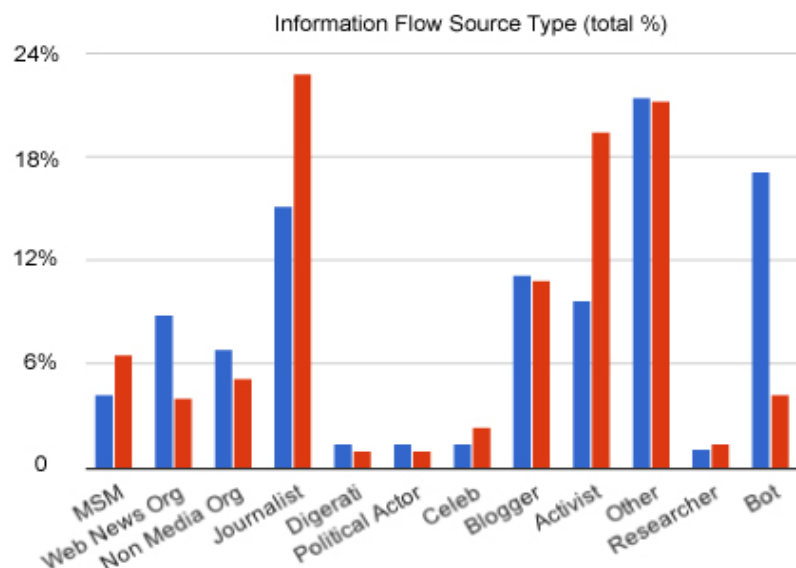


Actor Type Distribution (Egypt)



- Other (24.7%, 26.9%)
- Blogger (17.8%, 16.7%)
- Journalist (14.5%, 14.4%)
- Activist (11.9%, 12.3%)
- Bot (8.4%, 6%)
- MSM (7.1%, 7.3%)
- Non Media Org (4.1%, 4.3%)
- Web News Org (3.7%, 3.8%)
- Researcher (2.5%, 2.4%)
- Celeb (1.9%, 1.9%)
- Digerati (1.8%, 2.5%)
- Political Actor (1.6%, 1.5%)

	Median Tweets/Day	Median # of Followers
Organizations	15.98	4004
Individuals (excluding Others)	11.45	2340
Others	9.35	340



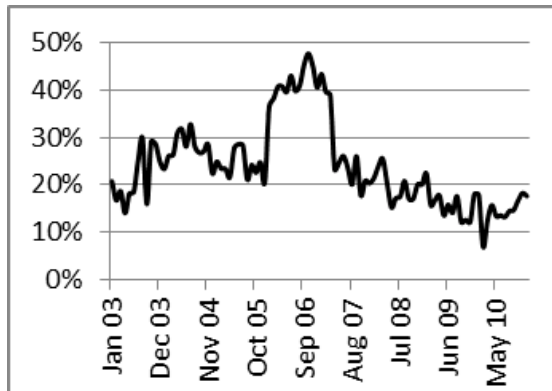
Sub-flows (Tunisia)	Count
Activist → Activist	49
Journalist → Other	48
Journalist → Blogger	41
Activist → Blogger	38
Other → Blogger	37
Journalist → Activist	34
Blogger → Blogger	31
Blogger → Other	31
Journalist → Journalist	30
Activist → Journalist	29

Sub-flows (Egypt)	Count
Journalist → Activist	111
Journalist → Other	109
Journalist → Blogger	102
Activist → Other	102
Activist → Activist	100
Other → Other	97
Activist → Blogger	85
Blogger → Blogger	78
Journalist → Journalist	70
Blogger → Activist	69

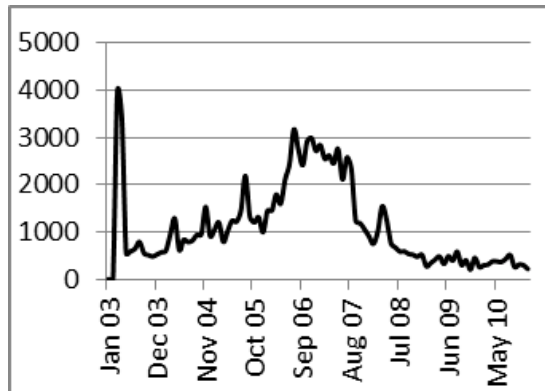
Blogs as a Collective War Diary

Summary

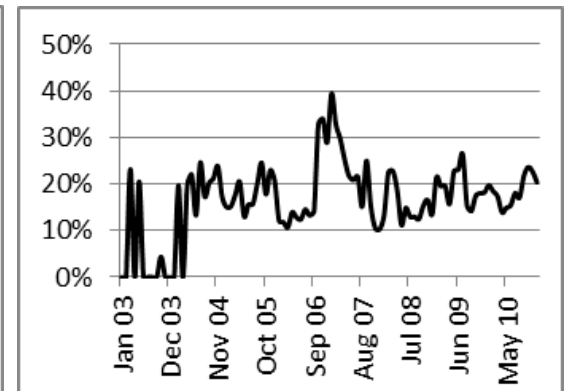
- Main goal: what can the blogosphere reveal about how a society responds to war over time?
- Data: Iraqi blog data spanning eight years during the Iraqi wars
- Findings:
 - Blog topics mimicked the manifestation of war and violence in the offline world
 - Pronoun use indicates the emergence of a collective identity
 - Discussion of daily life topics decreased during wartime; when violence waned, people got back to discussing daily life topics
- Strengths:
 - Mixed methods approach
 - Temporally long dataset
 - Analysis of both Arabic and English posts (English three times more frequent)



a. Timeline of war topics in English

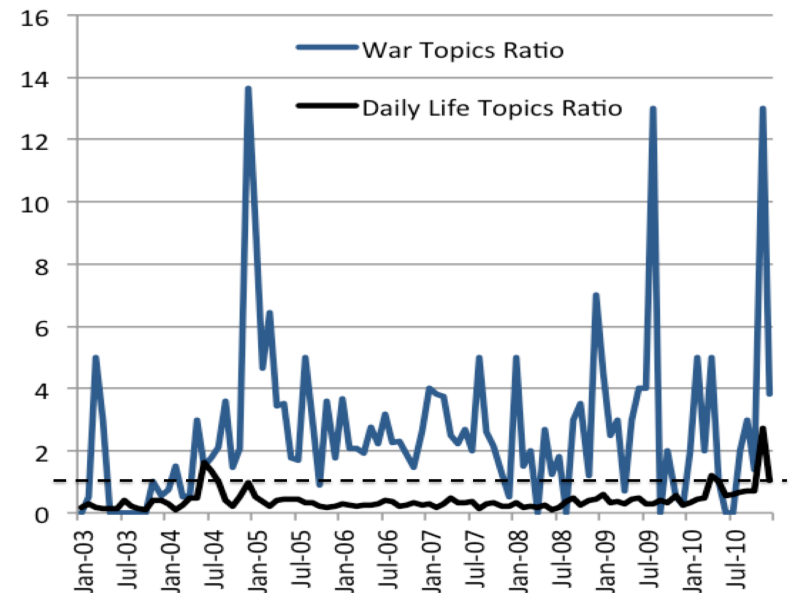
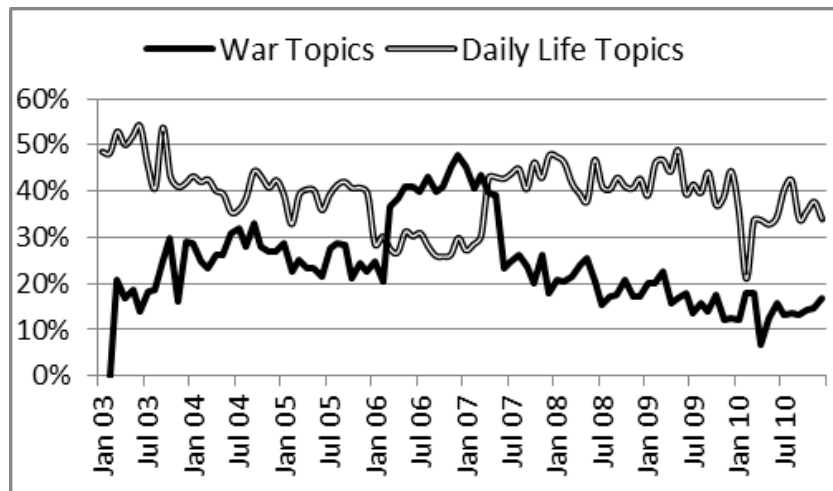


b. Body count



c. Timeline of war topics in Arabic

Arabic posts were more impersonal and showed a lag with external events



Lotan et al quote Shirky “Given that Twitter and other social media tools can be leveraged to spread information, Shirky (2009) has argued that social media may have the potential to provoke and sustain political uprisings by amplifying particular news and information”

Activism versus Slacktivism: How can we quantify/understand the role of Twitter in the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions?

On a first related note, Mark et al did not distinguish between blog authors posting first hand experiences of war (directly affected) and those who are affected peripherally. What kind of differences would you expect for the two groups?

On a second related note, it is important to tease out whether Twitter helped bring interested parties together, or allowed interest to grow in a community. What are the methodological challenges in trying to investigate this question?

Class Exercise I

Design I: For a social computing researcher, the outstanding question remains, what is the role of the average Twitter user? How can such an ecosystem that allows users with more authority to drive conversations, what kind of provisions need to be made to have the voice of the average user heard?

Mark et al studied both Arabic and English blogs and found some disclosure differences. What are the challenges of multi-language studies of social phenomenon?

Traditional news organizations are often not the main actors in the revolutions that were examined by Lotan et al. Why could be possible explanations behind this observation?

Most studies of disasters and social movements are very event specific. To what extent do you expect the findings based on the Arab Spring to translate to other contexts?

Would the findings be different if a more recent crisis was analyzed and would the platform matter?

Class Exercise II

Design II: Both papers show that social media were widely adopted during crisis events, and could be used to study a community's trajectory of activism and recovery.

Who are possible stakeholders who can act on this information?

What kind of design provisions could help stakeholders in this process?

Does the structural position of a user matter in what role emerges out of their activity (related to a crisis or a social movement)? Discuss in the light of strong and weak ties.

Lotan et al used the shingling method for string comparison to identify information flow patterns. What other alternative mechanisms could be adopted to detect flow of information?

Lotan et al also identified many diverse actor categories ranging from mainstream/non mainstream media, bloggers, activists, celebrities, political actors, researchers, bots, digerati etc. Are these roles context dependent? If so how and what implications does it have in studies of Twitter?

Lotan et al. also noted that different actors engaged differently with their audiences. MSMs and journalists commanded high response rates. Do you expect this to be consistent across events?